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(iv) characterizing any SRMs which are present in said extract such as to determine sequence identity or similarity with said target gene, and

(v) correlating the presence of said SRMs in the extract with the occurrence of gene silencing in said plant.

9. (Twice amended) A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the silencing of said target gene in the plant is associated with pathogen derived resistance.

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10. (Twice amended) A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the silencing of said target gene in the plant is associated with modification of a specific trait by co-suppression of the target gene.

11. (Twice amended) A method of identifying a silenced target gene in a plant in which gene silencing is detected as claimed in claim 1, which method further comprises the steps of:

(vi) preparing a library of genes from said plant, and

(vii) identifying those genes in said library which share sequence identity or similarity with any SRMs which are present in the extract as being genes which are silenced in the plant.

12. (Amended) A process for isolating one or more RNA molecules associated with target gene silencing from a sample of material from a plant, wherein the RNA molecules are SRMs which share sequence identity with the target gene, which process comprises the steps of:

(a) producing a nucleic acid extract from said sample,
(b) purifying said extract to produce purified RNA molecules by carrying out at least one purification step selected from the following steps (i) filtration; (ii) differential precipitation (iii) ion exchange chromatography, such as to isolate said SRMs.

17. (Twice amended) A process for isolating a silencing agent comprising SRMs for a target gene from a plant, which process comprises the steps of:

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- (i) silencing said target gene in said plant,
 - (ii) obtaining a sample of material from said plant,
 - (iii) performing a process in accordance with claim 12 to isolate said SRMs.

Please cancel claims 8, 16, and 26-29.

A marked-up copy of the amendments presented herein is provided in Appendix A.

REMARKS

Upon entry of this amendment, claims 1, 5-7, 9-15, 17, 21, and 32-34 will be pending in the application and under consideration.

The amendments to claim 1 find support in original claim 8. The amendments to claims 9-11, and 17 correct dependencies and minor typographical errors. The amendments to claim 12 find support in original claims 8, 16 and 17. No new matter has been added.

The August 28, 2002 Official Action and references cited therein have been carefully reviewed. In light of the amendments presented herewith and the following remarks, favorable reconsideration and allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

At the outset, Applicants acknowledge the withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1, 5-10, 12-17, 21, 26-29, and 32-34 under 35 U.S.C. §102 as allegedly anticipated by the Leysin presentation, and the rejection of claims 1, 5-17, 21, 26-29, and 32-34 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable